

## THE BENEFITS OF FATS

### WHAT ROLE DO FATS PLAY IN HEALTH?

Our bodies cannot live fat free. We need significant amounts of essential fatty acids to function properly and enhance immunity. The role of fats in the human body include the following:

- \* Fats keep cell membranes fluid and flexible which in turn affects the white blood cells that repel invaders of the body (builds your immune system).
- \* Fats promote normal growth, especially of blood vessels and nerves.
- \* Beneficial fats keep the skin and other tissues youthful and supple through lubrication.
- \* Fats are essential for hormone synthesis.

### Dieting and Fats

The nutritional deficiencies related to a fat-free diet have been linked to arthritis, cardiovascular disease, PMS, and headaches. "Fat free" often means added sugar and/or caffeine. You need to ask yourself, "does being thin mean that you are healthy?" It is the nutritional quality of food combined with exercise that promote a healthy body weight and enhance longevity.

Counting fat grams can take your focus off of the nutritional quality of the food. The false assumption is that all fats are equal. By eating more nutritious foods and including some quality fat in your diet, you will get hungry less often. The question becomes, "what are the beneficial fats?" Our bodies need a proper balance of the omega 3, omega 6 and omega 9 oils. Omega 3 oils (polyunsaturated oils) can be found in fish oil and unrefined vegetable oils such as flax. Omega 9 oils (monounsaturated oils) are found in eggs, macadamia, olive, avocado, almonds and coconut. Although considered to be a "beneficial fat" we recommend eating less omega 6 (polyunsaturated oils) since these are consumed in excess in the typical American diet and can promote inflammation. Omega 6 oils are found in certain vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, grape seed, and sesame. Omega 3 oils have been shown to decrease the risk of heart disease and inhibit certain kinds of cancers. To emphasize the omega 3 and omega 9 oils, eat more avocados, raw nuts & seeds, fish, olive and coconut oil.

Coconut oil enhances the health of your skin. It is a medium chain fatty acid that contains lauric acid which increases immunity ([www.lauricidin.com](http://www.lauricidin.com)) Medium fatty acids are absorbed easier, used up faster, and have fewer calories per gram (see "RX: Coconuts!" by Dr. Vermeiren M. Verallo-Rowell, MD for further research on this often neglected food.) Coconut oil can be used in salad dressings, baking, sautéing or as a margarine substitute.

### NUTS

Many Americans took nuts out of their diet because the ADA told us they had too much fat in them. We now have more heart disease, cancer, obesity, high cholesterol and diabetes. Nuts are valuable in the way they affect cholesterol. The monounsaturated fats in nuts help to lower LDL "bad cholesterol" and raise your HDL

“good cholesterol”. All nuts contain arginine, an amino acid that helps keep arteries clear, and magnesium and potassium, which are associated with lowering blood pressure. Here are examples of just some of the benefits of various nuts: Almonds in comparison with other nuts top the list for calcium, fiber, and vitamin E content. Brazil nuts have more calcium than milk and are high in selenium (antioxidant). Pistachios have more fiber than broccoli. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of zinc, which helps promote fertility, cell reproduction, vision, immunity and they protect against free radicals. Walnuts are a good source of melatonin which is a powerful antioxidant in addition to helping regulate our biological clocks. Raw, unsalted nuts are the best option. However, roasted unsalted nuts are the next best thing. Avoid the hydrogenated fats that could be used in the roasting process.

### **TRANS FATS [hydrogenated fats]**

Unsaturated fats (liquid at room temperature) are more unstable than saturated fats, and they can become rancid even at low temperatures. The hydrogenation of unsaturated fats cause them to “imitate” saturated oils which makes them more stable and therefore have a longer shelf life. This hydrogenation process produces trans fats (also called trans fatty acids), a synthetic or artificial fat that the human body cannot naturally process.

**“Women who eat higher levels of trans fats are almost four times more likely to have breast cancer” –*Cancer Epi.Bio.Prev.6:705,1997***

Research has shown that trans fats increase the LDL cholesterol, decrease the HDL cholesterol and thus increase the risk of coronary heart disease. Trans fats are extremely difficult to excrete from the body and are a low quality energy source. In other words, they may make you fatter. It takes 1 month to break down half of the normal fats consumed, but it takes 3 months to metabolize half of the trans fats consumed. Hydrogenated fats are found in almost every processed food in the supermarket from soups to chips, crackers, pastries, frozen foods, deep-fried anything, margarine and shortening. When reading labels, you can spot them by seeing if the word “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” is on the ingredient list.

### **Saturated Fats and Cholesterol Get A Poor Reputation**

Before 1920 coronary heart disease was rare in America. Today heart disease causes at least 40% of all US deaths. If, as we have been told, heart disease results from the consumption of saturated fats, one would expect to find a corresponding increase in animal fat in the American diet. Actually, the reverse is true. From 1910 to 1970, the proportion of traditional animal fat in the American diet declined from 83% to 62%, and butter consumption plummeted from 18 pounds per person per year to 4. During the past 80 years, dietary cholesterol intake has increased only 1%. During the same period the percentage of dietary vegetable oils in the form of margarine [which is a trans fat], shortening and refined omega 6 oils increased about 400% while the consumption of sugar and processed foods increased about 60%.

### **Low saturated fats/low cholesterol diets=increase risk of mortality.**

In a multi-year British study involving several thousand men, half were asked to reduce saturated fat and cholesterol in their diets, to stop smoking and to increase the amounts of unsaturated oils such as margarine and vegetable oils. After one year those on the “good” diet had 100% more deaths than those on the “bad” diet, in spite of the fact that those men on the “bad” diet continued to smoke (ref: *Lancet, 1983, 1:1062-1065*). Remember, to focus on more omega 3 and omega 9 oils.

**“Saturated fat reduces children’s allergies and trans fats increase them”  
*Allergy 2001;56:425-428.***

Mother's milk provides a higher proportion of cholesterol than almost any other food. It also contains over 50% of its calories as fat, much of it saturated fat. Both cholesterol and saturated fat are essential for growth in babies and children, especially the development of the brain. Yet, the American Heart Association is now recommending a low-cholesterol, low-fat diet for children. Commercial formulas are low in saturated fats and soy formulas are devoid of cholesterol. A recent study linked low fat diets with failure to thrive in children. –*Pediatrics, March 1994, 93: 3: 438-443.*

**FDA Trans fat rule**

The Institute of Medicine (the group who determines the RDA's) issued a report stating that there is no safe RDA for trans fatty acids (ref: *Shape Dec 2002*). The FDA published a rule in 2003 requiring trans fat contents to be listed on the Nutrition Facts panel which accompanies most packaged foods. However, the FDA's new law allows companies to add up to **.5 grams** of trans fat per serving and still say “zero” on the label. Learn to be a savvy shopper. We cannot depend on the FDA to make its rules for labeling to sound logical. Do not depend on the front label to get your nutritional information. Always read the INGREDIENT label to see what is in the product.

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